



(Standard font by Beth, Italics by Carlos)

Christmas 2005

Dear Friends and Family,

Season's greetings to you all! I'm only now able to get around to putting this letter together, so as a consequence our card and letter will be reaching you after Christmas. Be that as it may, it's better late than never, no? So, what's happened since last year...

Early in January, Carlos, Dustin and I flew to Acapulco for a week. Our accommodations were great. We had used our Hawaiian time-share in exchange for a week in Acapulco. The Grand Mayan was more like a luxury hotel than time-share condo: daily maid service, paper delivered, several restaurants, hundreds of flunkies all over the place. The Grand Mayan boasts the world's longest pool (almost a km), a water park, many swimming pools, lakes, ponds, and waterfalls as well as a great beach. It was all warm water so we were all in water heaven.

Acapulco was Carlos's family's favorite vacation spot while growing up in Mexico City. His parents were married there when it was little more than a fishing village whereas now it has over a million residents. The mountain sides are completely built up and there are Sam's Club and other big box stores all over the place. The coastal plain to the south of the city, where we were staying, looks like Florida with lots of high-rises.

We went to La Quebrada, the site of the famous 130 foot high cliffs where divers jump into narrow gorges (you've likely seen them in some old movie or some such thing). It was jammed with tourists that came in tour busses, mainly from two huge cruise ships. We spent some time in Old Acapulco, walking around the Zocalo as well as visiting two beaches, Caleta (known as the "morning beach" in Carlos's youth and very crowded) and Caletilla, both of which are favored by Mexican families and have no foreign tourists. One day we took a glass-bottom boat from Caletilla Beach to visit Roqueta Island. It's known for great snorkeling, which we tried, but were disappointed – instead I cut my foot on some a piece of broken glass buried in the sand. Daily we passed the famous Los Flamigos hotel, which was a favorite of many Hollywood stars, including John Wayne & Johnny Weissmuller. At our hotel, one night, we went to a Mexican Fiesta, with mariachis, dancers, and an all you could drink and eat buffet. Kind of the Mexican version of the luaus put on by Hawaiian hotels. There is still a lot more to see there; maybe next time we'll take a shotover jet ride up the Pampagayo River, which sounds kinda cool. For photos go to

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/plummerc/Acapulco/photos.htm>

In April Doune died. We buried her in the back yard. That was heart-wrenching for me, having never had or lost a pet before. Dusty saw the bright side: "You don't have to wipe up any more pee, Mom" and "Now I can get a pet!" Indeed, a few days later we went

and got Dustin a pet rat, which he originally called Mr. Whiskers. Later we realized he was a she, so her name is now Pepper. Dusty loves her like crazy.

Also in April, the cousin of Carlos, Carolyn, lost her husband, Alan Dundes (a world-famous anthropologist/folklorist at UC Berkeley). He had a heart attack while teaching a graduate seminar. We had last seen them over Xmas break when we drove to the Berkeley hills to attend a Mexican themed party at one of Carlos's high school friend's home. We spent the night with the Dundes, which was a really nice visit. A wonderful memorial was held at Berkeley for Alan, attended by hundreds of colleagues and friends from around the world. His passing away was devastating for all.

In May I (Carlos, as indicated by italics) flew to Denver for Barry Corbet's memorial. Before the memorial, I drove a rental car to Garden of the Gods, outside of Colorado Springs. This is one of the few sites of geologic interest in the country that I had not seen. The memorial was a wonderful gathering of friends from all aspects of Barry's life, including many of the prominent mountaineering people from the 1960s. All but one of the 8 surviving members of the 1963 American Everest Expedition were there. (Barry was on the team that made the first ascent of Everest's West Ridge.) I met Barry my freshman year at Dartmouth. He was a sophomore, but already president and driving force for this venerable institution. He continued to be a good friend and personal hero after college. He branched into making highly acclaimed ski films. His climbing and skiing days were truncated by a helicopter that crashed while he was filming skiers. He began the second part of his life as a paraplegic. Eventually, he put his talents and energy into improving the lives of disabled people--first through films, then through writing. Go to: <http://barrycorbet.com/>

Much of the summer I spent working to prepare for our accreditation review. Nevertheless, toward the end of the summer, we did have some fun. Dustin went to stay with some former students of mine and their kids in Davis while Carlos and I joined the Sacramento Volcanological Society on a trip to the highlands of Mexico. The purpose of the trip was to visit various types of volcanic features and to visit some archaeological sites. It was a wonderful trip. The first night we stayed at a fantastic hotel separate from the rest of the group, because we were told that we would spend the first night at a KOA and I wasn't in the mood for that (it turns out it had been a joke). So, a friend in Mexico, Suzie Glusker, booked us a room at the Hotel Villa Arqueologica Teotihuacan, which retains its colonial charm (really, really, really nice). Another outstanding hotel was originally an Hacienda that dated back to the 1690s. It was a wonderful trip, the details of which you can read (and see pictures of) at the site Carlos put together: <http://www.csus.edu/geology/vssac/Mexico/VSSAC-Mexico.htm>.

On our last day in Mexico, we went to an exhibit on Anita Brenner, Suzie Glusker's mother, that Suzy and others put together at the Diego Rivera Mural Museum. Suzie's mother led one heck of an interesting life and to my surprise it turns out that she was one of the earliest American-trained anthropologists. The following website, by Suzie's cousin, provides some interesting details: <http://www.mariebrenner.com/articles/aunt/ab3.html>.

I was amazed to see a bunch of stark naked women standing at the base of the Cuauhtémoc statue at Mexico's busiest intersection. They were protesting something. Things have changed since I lived in Mexico.

In October, I flew to Salt Lake City for the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America. In addition to upgrading my currency in the sessions, I met with my publisher from McGraw-Hill. We are trying to find someone to phase in as a coauthor of the textbook to replace me. The current two year revision cycle is pretty demanding. I only get a few months off between revisions. The current edition (11th edition) of Physical Geology was printed this month. I haven't seen a copy yet.

Dustin is now in fourth grade and he continues to do well academically. He also is getting along with other kids better. He played soccer for the sixth year on an amazingly dynamic team, which was really fun to watch. And, he's on a 3rd-4th grade basketball team that features some kids who regularly shoot three-pointers!! Dustin continues with scouts and is now a Webelos. He's also taking piano lessons and is doing well at them. I think the most salient thing about Dustin is that he is incredibly creative – always building things, constructing planes, making wonderful origami figures, etc. He's really amazing.

Regarding my adult sons: Charlie is with us most of the time. His medications for schizophrenia have kept him pretty stable this year. He is still mentally disorganized, but fairly cheerful and likes to socialize. He continues to dabble at classes in community college. He turned 30 this year. Brian is 28. In September, he had a mental meltdown and ended up in the San Diego County Jail facing some very serious assault charges. We hired a very good (and expensive) lawyer and the charges were reduced to one misdemeanor assault charge which could have cost him a year in jail. He spent 3 weeks in jail before being bailed out. Then a few days in a mental hospital. In November, I flew him to San Diego for his court appearance. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to time served and 3 years probation and having to take anger management classes. The experience was quite draining on me. He seems ok now and is working at an upscale café/deli in Sacramento. Being an Eagle Scout and graduating from a prestigious college does not keep you from the dark side.

Carlos and I continue to do and be well. He's busy with his book, as usual, and I with my job, as usual and we're both busy with the kids.

Anyhow, Season's Greetings and Best Wishes to you all.

Beth & Carlos